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ABSTRACT

Designed as an instructional aid for college professors, this model is used to illustrate the broad relationship among the primary perspectives and concerns of the physical and human sciences, history, geography, and religion. Human knowledge is conceptual. Man's "real" objective knowledge consists of mental analogs that are concerned with the realized or sensed. Man's "extra-real" objective knowledge is made up of abstractions that are concerned with objects, space, time, and combinations of these three which have not or cannot be sensed. The physical sciences, physical geography, and natural history speculate on objective extra-reality through their interpretations of objective reality. The three primary perspectives from which humans can view the objective world are topical, chronometrical, and spatial. Meanings come into play as man attempts to deal with real and extra-real objective knowledge and understanding. Humans want to know what the objective means to them personally or to other humans. Meanings that individuals believe to be human in origin are a part of human subjective reality. Those meanings that are believed to be extra-human are a part of human subjective extra-reality, or human religion. The topical sciences, history, and geography can directly study only the real objective parts of religion such as religious people, symbols, and ritual. The philosophies, as well as the findings of science, history, and geography, can be directly addressed from the religious perspective, because religion is not methodologically limited to observations of the objective universe. (RM)

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A VERBAL AND GRAPHIC MODEL FOR ILLUSTRATING THE PERSPECTIVE OF RELIGION IN RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE OF THE PHYSICAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES, HISTORY, AND GEOGRAPHY.

by

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April 1983

SP 015 020

Abstract

Designed as an instructional aid, this verbal and graphic model is used to illustrate the broad relationship among the primary perspectives and concerns of the physical and human sciences, history, geography, and religion. As a postscript, this discussion is extended into the realm of the geography of religion through an illustration of the primary, secondary, and tertiary concerns of interrelated fields and subfields within geography, religion, and history.
Keywords: objective reality; objective extra-reality; subjective reality; dimentional sciences; extra-real subjective understanding and knowledge, or subjective extra-reality.

Presented below is a verbal and graphic model designed to illustrate the relationship among the perspectives of the physical and human sciences, history, geography, and religion. The author recognizes up front that universally accepted definitions for terms as basic to this discussion as "science", "history", "geography", and "religion" do not exist because such terms tend to be as philosophically dynamic as their subscribers. Being artificial and arbitrary mental inventions and conventions, definitions are not "true" or "false" as much as they are "more" or "less" useful intellectual analogs that attempt to delimit the scope and bounds of parts of a greater whole.[1] With this in mind, I would invite the reader not to forsake any philosophical stance they may hold in lieu of those I have chosen to draw from in the construction of this model. Further, I would point out that it is the nature of all models to be oversimplistic representations of reality.[2] The graphic portion of this model has been intentionally reduced to its most simplistic form to facilitate its use in the classroom.

The Scientific Perspective

In science the search for new knowledge proceeds through the manipulation and observation of the objective universe (Figure 1). A scientist makes a subjective decision to subscribe to this philosophical approach and utilizes a scientific method (Figure 2). In large part the method a scientist employs determines which factual observations will be selected for interpretation (facts being observed

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

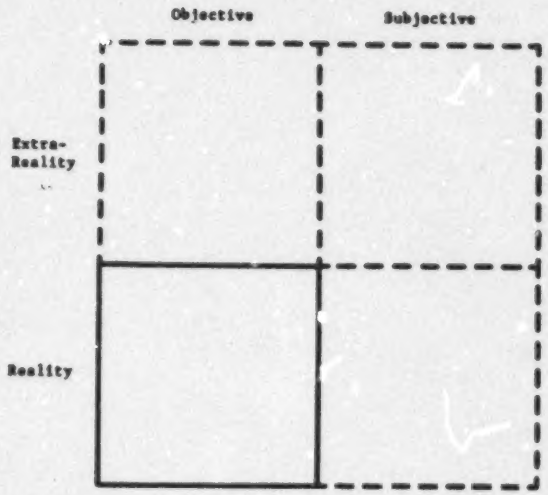

Fig. 1

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

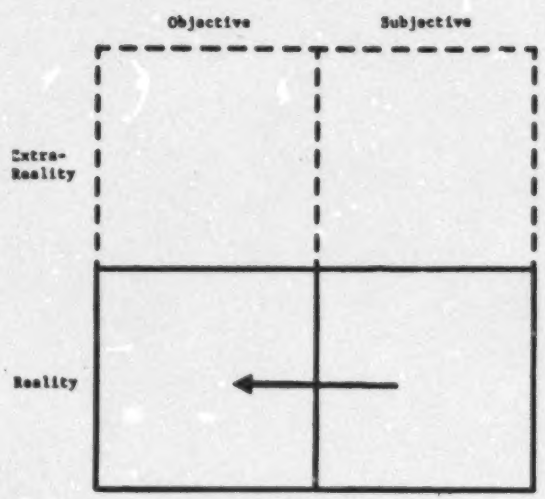

Fig. 2

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

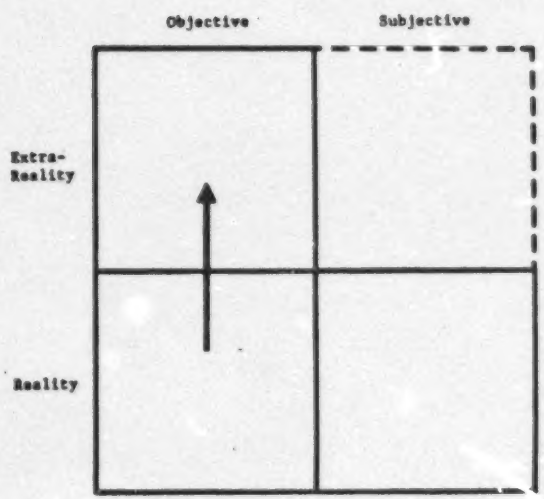

Fig. 3

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

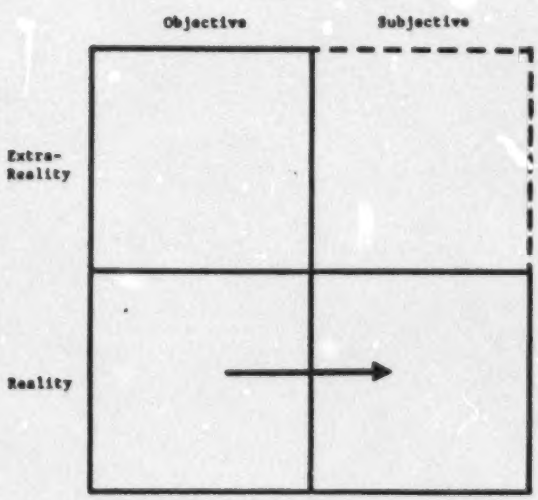

Fig. 4

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(mental analogs)

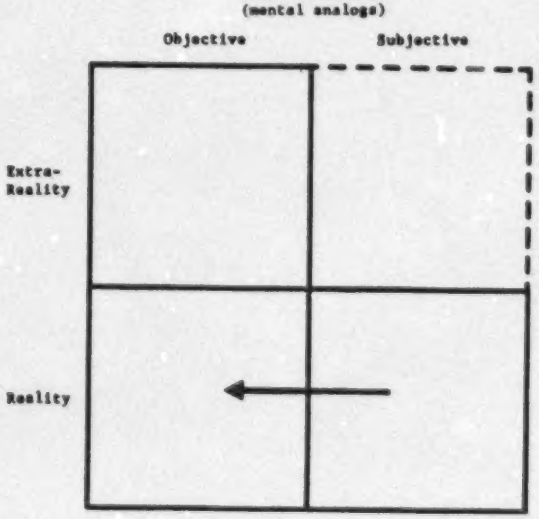

Fig. 5

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

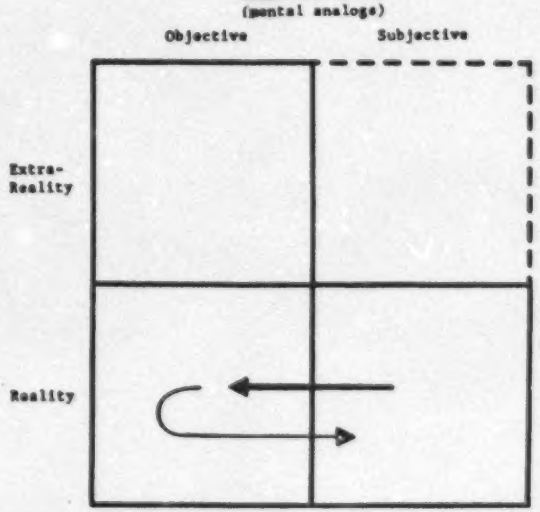

Fig. 6

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phenomena or intellectually sensed environmental stimuli).[3] The interpretations of what is perceived or "realized" about the objects of study increase the realm of human "objective reality".[4] Objective reality is that part of human understanding that considers the physical essence of objects and their spatial and temporal relationships. The primary task of physical science has been to utilize objective reality via the scientific method in ways devised to allow for observing or realizing aspects of "objective extra-reality" (Figure 3).

I am using the term "objective extra-reality" in reference to that part of human knowledge and understanding that includes all speculative or theorized objects, space, and time beyond current human experience, realization, or objective reality. An example of an extra-real object is an atom. Individual atoms have never been sensed by the five human senses, nor through the enhancement of our senses via scientific instruments. Yet, physical scientists maintain that they exist by virtue of indirect evidence obtained through the manipulation of objective reality, that is to say, through objects that can be sensed or realized in space and time. Scientists have found many new ways to gather evidence about atoms during the last several decades. This has changed their conception of the atom from a simple three component entity composed of electrons, protons, and neutrons to a structure of unknown complexity with dozens of kinds of subatomic parts. Most humans educated in the 1930's and 1940's were taught that atoms exist and that they were composed of electrons, protons, and

neutrons. Most college physics students today are being presented with a much more complex atomic model. Most physics students of the 1940's and of today accept the version presented to them as truth or real although they have never experienced the scientific evidence themselves, assuming they were ever informed of the existing supportive evidence. Speculative or extra-real objects are believed to exist regardless of whether they will ever be experienced and in fact may someday be proven not to exist. Such is the case with the wave theory and the photon theory of light. Someday one, or the other, or parts of both, may be proven to be correct, but right now they are conflicting and competing parts of human extra-reality. An example of extra-real space is the space or void speculated to exist between the atoms in a piece of steel. Examples of extra-real time are the past and the future.

The primary task of human science has been to utilize that part of objective reality related to man and his environment for the purposes of increasing the realm of "subjective reality", that part of human understanding dealing with human meaning (Figure 4). For example, a human scientist can measure population growth rates and the accompanying changes in man/land relationships (Figure 5). These objective facts, however, remain meaningless unless they are subjectively interpreted, that is to say "given meaning" (Figure 6). The meanings given to these observations and measurements might be summed up under the subjective heading of "population pressure" and disseminated throughout the human race as "true" subjective human knowledge. Many individuals may reject the concept of population

pressure and/or the supporting evidence and its interpretation, thus choosing not to incorporate this concept into their subjective understanding or reality. Others will never hear of the concept and it will not become a part of their subjective reality, either. The projection of population growth rates into the future is a part of human speculative or extra-real objective understanding (Figure 7). Future predictions of population pressures based on these projections are a part of subjective reality, as long as the interpretive meanings are in terms of what they mean to humans (Figure 8).

Space and Time

Space, which usually is measured in three dimensions of its own (i.e., height, width, and depth), and time, sometimes referred to as the 4th dimension, are not objects, but conceptual tools devised by man and used in the measurement of real and extra-real objects and voids in a manner relevant to the human experience. There are many types of topical dimensioning, such as organic/inorganic and magnetic/non-magnetic. Many of these are based at least partially or indirectly on space and time measurements. Others are based on other types of sensed data such as color, taste, and smell.

All space and time eludes definition, but parts of each are defined by people from their primary reference point which is themselves, or their personal reality. Time is defined in terms of relative motion. Space is defined in terms of relative location, distance, and direction. The defined parts of space are often called places

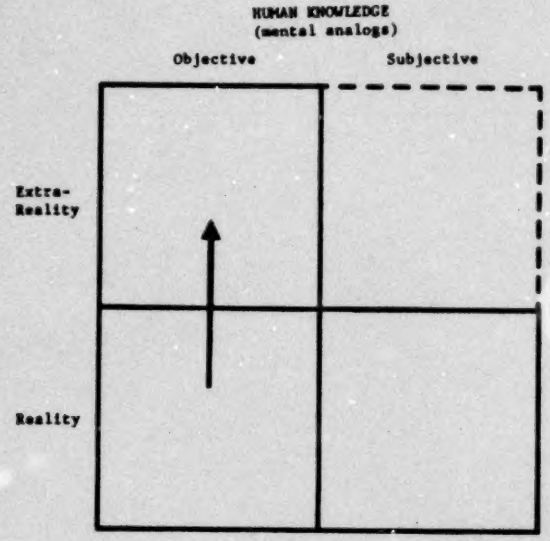


Fig. 7

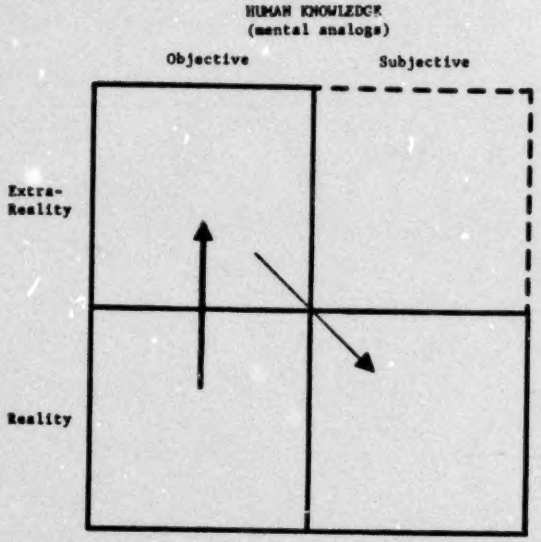
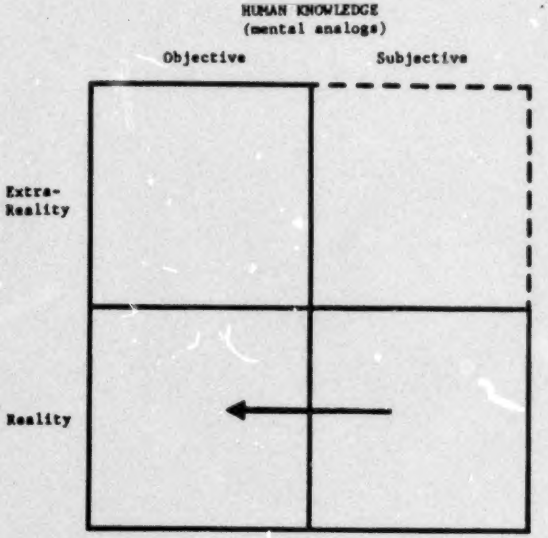


Fig. 8



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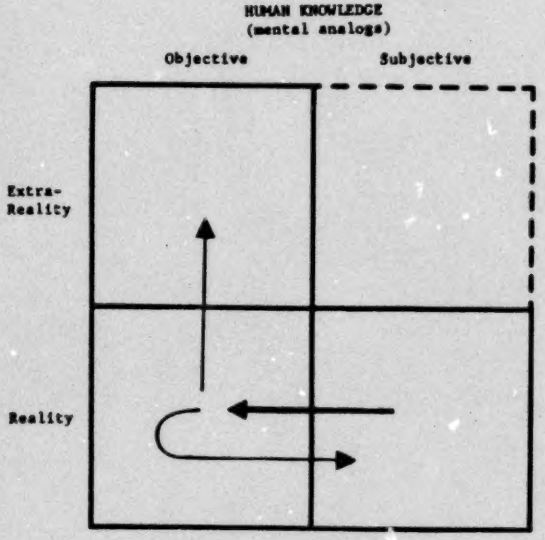
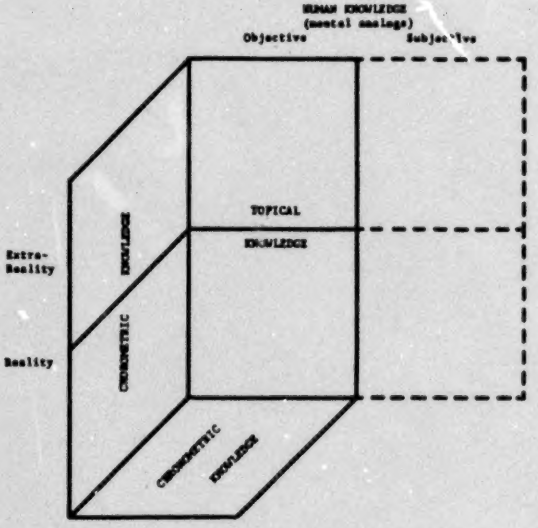


Fig. 10



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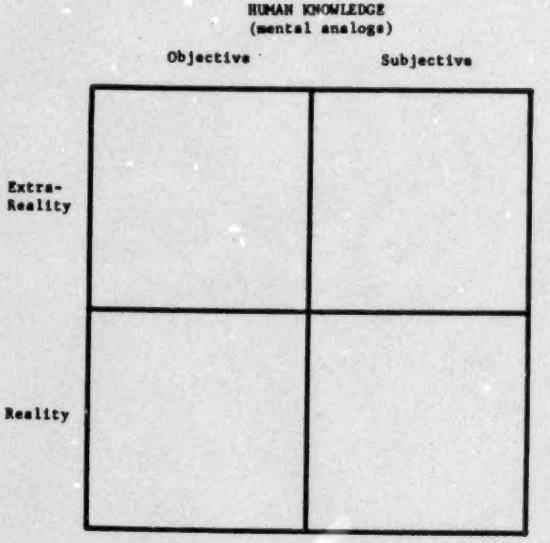

Fig. 12

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or regions. Geographers have also bandied about such terms as realm, site, locale, subregion, and core, often assigning arbitrary hierarchies or scales.[5] A region is constructed through the analytical separation of one place from other places or space and is usually identified by characteristic internal bonds or "place-bonds".

The Historical Perspective

Historians are professional speculators about the past.[6] Through differentiation (which is a subjective process) of the historical record (which is physical or objective) (Figure 9), historians can measure and gain insights into the nature of objective and subjective change through time and the temporal interconnections of diverse elements and processes (Figure 10). Generally, historians are most concerned with the human past as recorded by man. Archaeologists and some physical anthropologists are most concerned with man's unrecorded past and natural historians, like paleontologists, are most concerned with the non-human past. They provide a special understanding of the present and insights into the future with their unique time-oriented perspective. The primary historical point of view is often termed chronological or temporal, however, I offer chronometric as perhaps a more useful term because it includes all the ways in which to measure time or the relative motion of objects in space.

The Geographical Perspective

Geography primarily deals with space, including location (relative space) and place (defined space), particularly that of the Earth's surface, and the relationship between space and objects (human and non-human) in time. Studying this type of relationship makes it necessary to understand the object, even if this type of understanding is relegated as a secondary concern. The topical sciences are primarily concerned with the object and only secondarily concerned with the relationship between the object and space and time. Thus, the relationships among objects, space, and time become legitimate areas of overlap and scientific trespass between those using the chorologic, the chronometric, and the topical approach[7] (Figure 11). The use of "Chorometric" is not necessarily preferred here over "chorologic" because the usage of the latter term is generally more encompassing, (referring to measured space and spatial relationships in general rather than only sequentially ordered space) than is often the case with "chronologic" or "temporal". The "topical approach" refers to the analytical, and therefore artificial, partitioning or grouping of objects and subjects into classes. Each class is dealt with as being different from other classes and the components of each class are dealt with as being similar to each other. Each of these three approaches can be applied in a systematic manner.

Geography becomes scientific through the use of the "scientific method" to look for cause and effect relationships as in defined

regions, among regions, or for developing new regions; also for seeking generalizations, developing theoretical concepts, and predicting.[8] Although contemporary geography and history are at least in part a science, neither is a topical science concerned primarily with a single category of objects or subjects. They are spatial and time-oriented sciences, or dimentional sciences. Subjects, or thoughts and ideas and their meanings, may incorporate the concepts of time and space but are not themselves directly measurable in those dimensions because they only exist in the minds of humans. However, human subjects, or "real" subjective understanding, are associated with, and inseparable from, humans who create, perpetuate, and change subjective meanings. Therefore, history and human geography can deal with subjects indirectly as the social sciences do through the study of people and their works.

The Religious Perspective

Religion has two primary aspects, the mental and the physical, or human thoughts and human behaviors (Figure 12). Atheists and agnostics can "practice" religion, but that does not necessarily make them religious (Figure 13). McGuire and Luckmann identify meaning as the most important element of religion.[9] McGuire actually goes a step further, borrowing from Tillich, when she uses the term "ultimate meaning" in lieu of the more commonly used "ultimate reality" in her

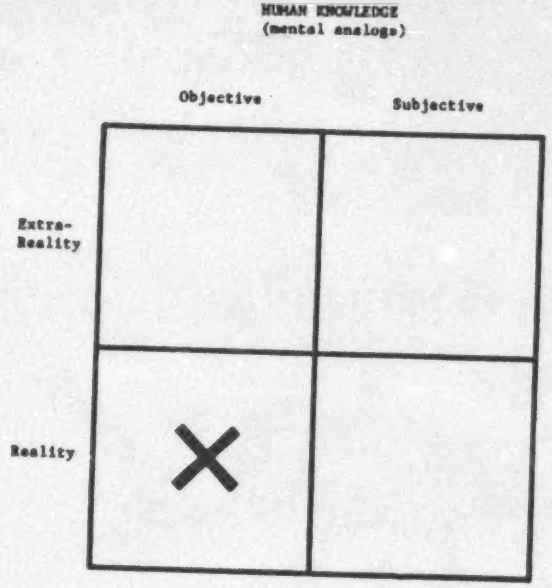


Fig. 13

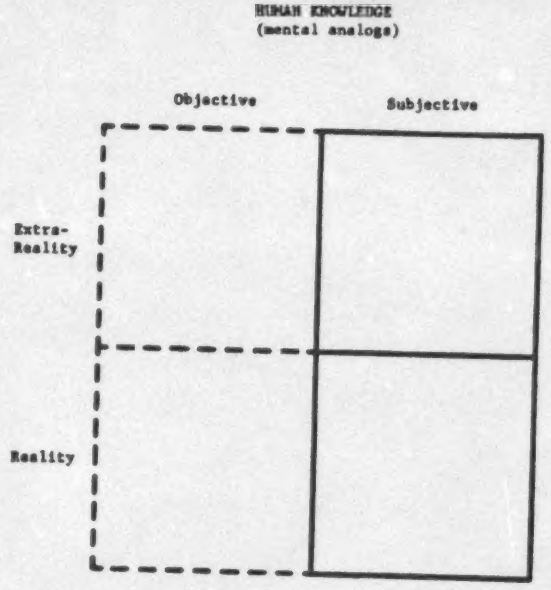


Fig. 14

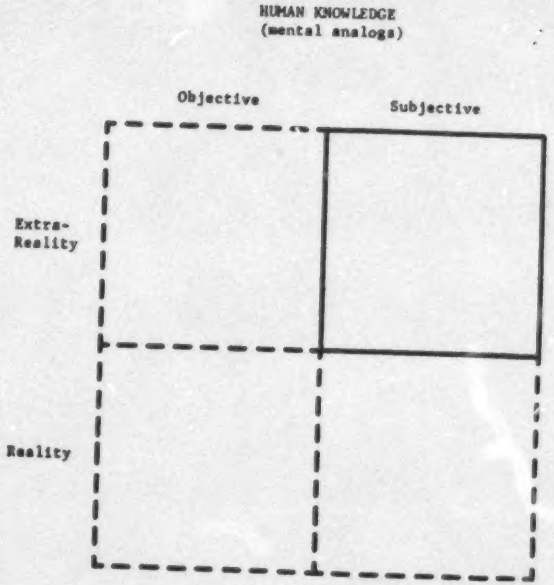
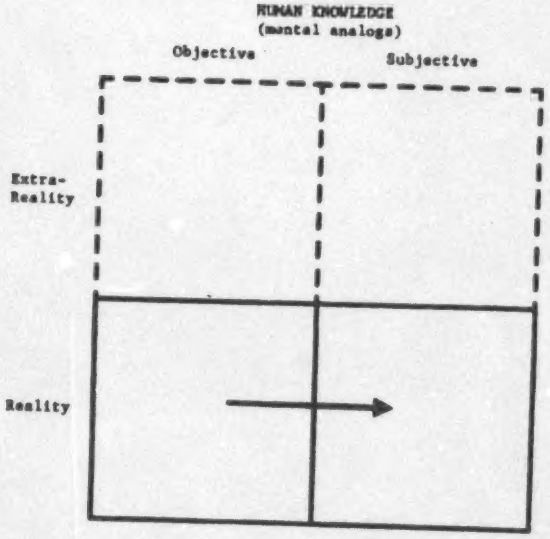


Fig. 15



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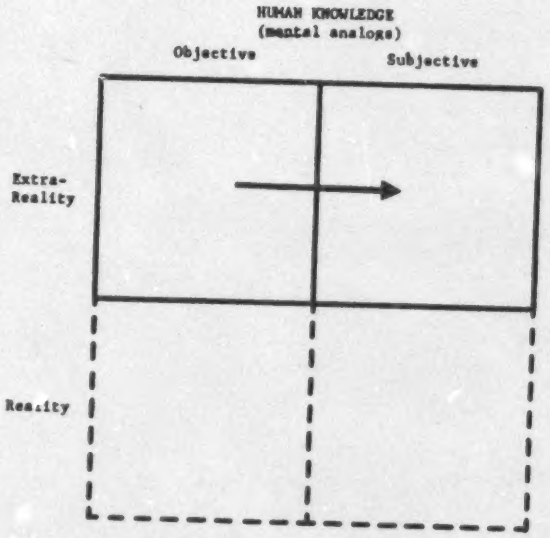

Fig. 17

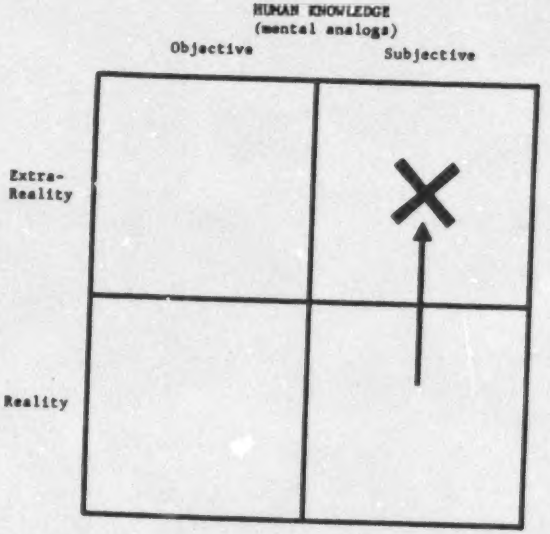

Fig. 18

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discussion of the essence of religion.[10] Luckmann refers to religion as the construction of a "universe of meaning" or "positing of a sacred cosmos".[11] This definition is similar to Berger's "human enterprise" for establishing a "sacred cosmos".[12] Meanings are mental interpretations that exist only in the human mind (Figure 14). Thus, the essence of religion does not lie in the objective world of observable objects and behaviors. As a result scientists, with their methodological limitations, and, in general, historians and geographers do not, and cannot, directly study the essence or substantive part of religion.

Although all subjective meanings are a part of man's mental composition, not all meanings are religious. Only those meanings that have relevance beyond or transcend humans are generally considered religious (Figure 15) even though most religious meanings, or understanding, are also relevant to humans. Those aspects of meanings thought or believed to have relevance beyond mankind cannot be completely realized or experienced by mankind and can only be a part of man's speculative or what I call "extra-real subjective" understanding and knowledge, or, as Robertson might call it, "transcendent reality".[13] For example, humans can realize or experience the personal or human meaning of "thou shalt not steal" when the lone flower of an individual's Zebra plant is stolen. This type of meaning is a part of an individual's subjective reality (Figure 16). However, humans can only speculate about the meaning of

such an act to the plant, to God, the universal order, to the subjective reality of others, or to extra-human meanings, including an ultimate meaning (Figure 17). These speculative meanings are a part of an individual's "subjective extra-reality".

The personal nature of human knowledge and understanding just mentioned helps to illustrate the point previously illuded to that human knowledge is both personal and collective. (The simplistic diagrams being utilized in this paper can be used to illustrate either collective or individual knowledge and understanding.) For example, the existence of the planet Pluto is a real part of human knowledge because humans have sensed (observed) Pluto. However, most humans who know of Pluto's existence have never personally sensed (seen) Pluto and for them Pluto is a speculative objective or a part of their objective extra-reality. In other words, Pluto is real to them, not because they have realized, experienced, or sensed it, but because they believe or are convinced it is real. Belief is also the key in determining which meanings are a part of religion. The meanings a person believes to be true and to have at least partial extra-human relevance are a part of that person's religion or religious beliefs and philosophy. All the meanings that each and every person believes to be true and accepts as at least partially extra-human are a part of "religion", or of the total sum of human religions. The meanings associated with the ancient Norse and Greek gods (extra-real symbols) may no longer be a part of anybody's beliefs or religion or personal subjective extra-reality. However, the

record of these extra-real, or speculative, meanings remain as a part of objective reality.

The religious or non-religious nature of the elements of objective and subjective reality and objective extra-reality depends on their association with each individual's subjective extra-reality (or extra-human meanings). Atheists do not seek or accept extra-real meanings because they don't believe there is such a thing. For them, human or real subjective reality which can only be experienced and meaningful to humans is the only kind of meaning that exists. The absence (and rejection) of the religious perspective and, thus, any extra-human meaning, is why Marxism can only be considered a "quasi-religion" at most (except perhaps functionally), despite its other characteristics. Whether they care or not that there might be such a thing, agnostics do not know if there is any extra-real meaning, don't believe they can ever know, and don't believe any other human can possibly know. Not all religious people have, or are seeking, a fully developed analog that contains or explains the ultimate meaning.[14] To be religious, one only has to seek or accept any part of man's subjective extra-real knowledge or understanding regardless of the personal motives for doing so (Figure 18). Atheists and agnostics, on the other hand, do not seek or accept extra-real meaning, thus their personal reality does not include a religious perspective (Figure 19).

A person may be functionally identified as not being religious

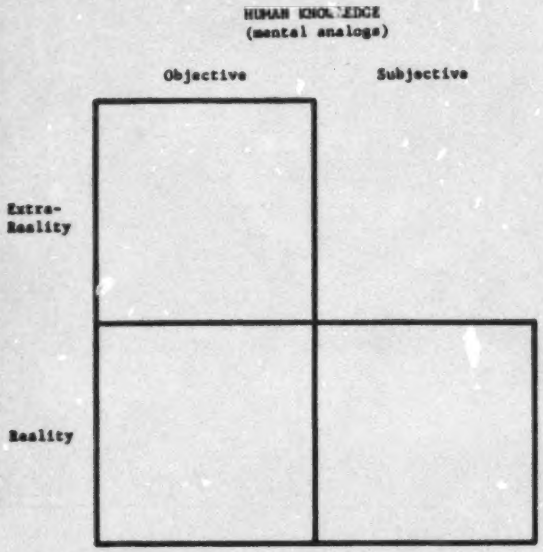

Fig. 19

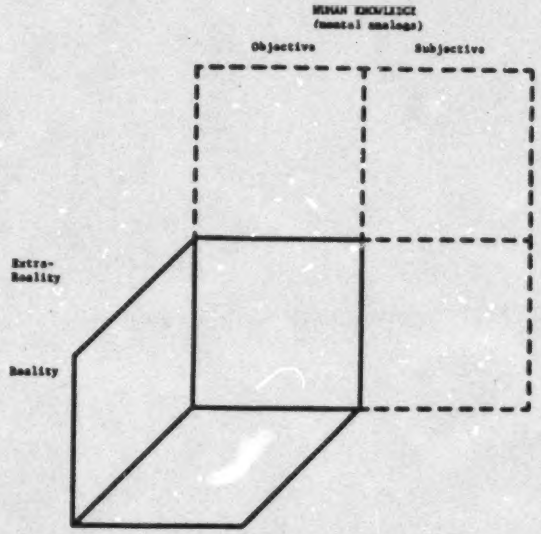

Fig. 20

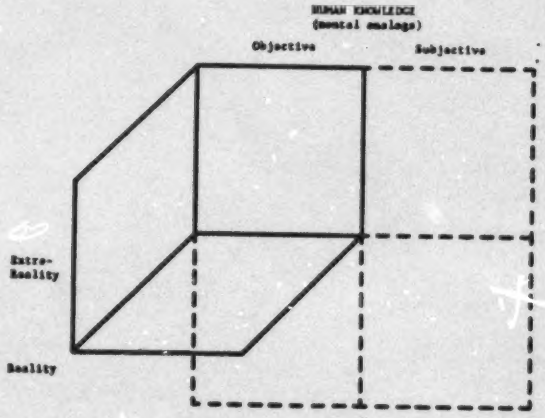

Fig. 21

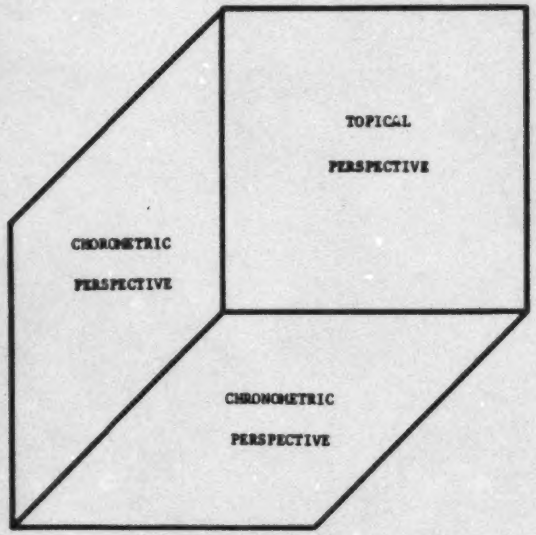

Fig. 22

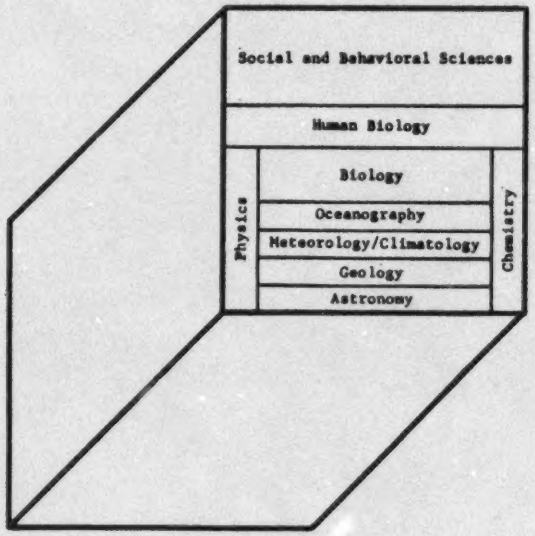

Fig. 23

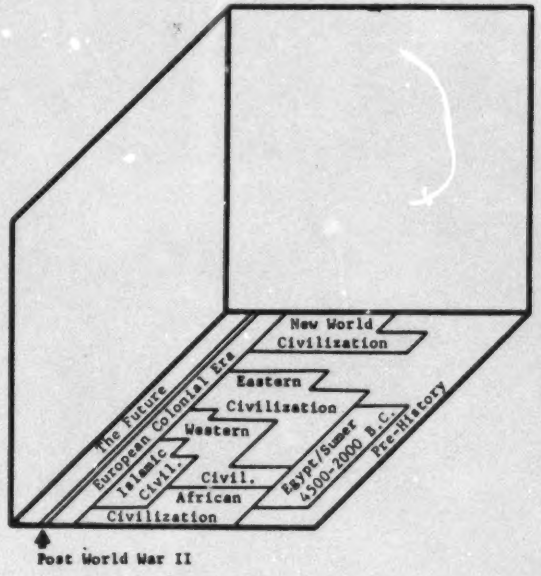

Fig. 24

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if they do not practice a religion, belong to a religious group, or espouse the doctrines of any particular religious group. However, they may still value some extra-human meaning. As with the atheist who practices a religion, this is another example of confusing someone who is religious with someone who acts religious; or being (mentally) religious with religious behavior. It is the speculative knowledge of, or the search for, extra-human "meaning" beyond man's own known and experienced subjective reality that sets religion and religious philosophy apart from science and other non-religious philosophies. The religious point of view or perspective, then, is primarily and ultimately from the realm of subjective extra-real understanding and knowledge.

The Scientific Study of Religion

Many social scientists favor functional definitions of religion which are based on observable types of phenomena, like real objects, space, time, and ritualistic behavior and deal with what something "does".[15] Religion defined as a scientific function has resulted in definitions which refer to religion as a "system" or "set" of something like beliefs, practices, symbols, meanings, rituals, and/or institutions.[16] Berger offers more vague, though never the less physical, definition when he refers to religion as a "human enterprise".[17] Though flawed, functional definitions are perhaps the

only practical kind for use in the scientific study of religion even if it means golf and atheism are sometimes included as religion.[18] In science only the objective world can be directly dealt with, for nothing else can be studied scientifically, that is to say, objectively realized or observed. Because of this philosophical limitation, Erich Isaac maintains that religion can only be defined by scientists as a science, pseudoscience (or science imitator), or scientific function (or system).[19] This view not only reflects similar views from the sociology of religion but of the functionalist movement in anthropology and the phenomenlogical movement in history. While some social scientists tactfully sidestep substantive definitions for religion which deal with what religion "is", Weber just states flatly that it "is not even our concern".[20] However, the total realm of human understanding is not limited to the contributions of science and its philosophy. The philosophy of science itself is but one of man's many conceptual or mental inventions.

Human Knowledge: A Summary

Human knowledge is conceptual. Humans "know" via sensory experiences and through the construction of mental analogs which are based on experiences and previously constructed analogs. Geertz refers to man as a symbolizing, conceptualizing, and meaning-seeking animal.[21] Man's "real" objective knowledge consists of mental analogs

that are concerned with the realized or sensed (Figure 20). Man's "extra-real" objective knowledge as I have termed it is made up of abstractions or speculative analogs that are concerned with objects, space, time, and combinations of these three which have not or cannot be sensed (i.e., the past and future) (Figure 21). The physical sciences, physical geography, and natural history speculate on objective extra-reality through their interpretations of objective reality (Figure 26).

There are three primary perspectives from which humans can view the objective world (Figure 22). The first point of view is topical in which the entire universe is artificially divided or classified into types, or categories, of topics. Each of the human and physical sciences systematically studies that topic or that part of the universe they have analytically carved out as their own (Figure 23). The second way in which humans can view the world is chronometrically or through time (Figure 24). Using this point of view, the artificially divided world of the topical sciences is reunited, usually by historians, including natural historians, and then analyzed, or divided, into temporal units for study. This process offers mankind an entirely different perspective from which to view the world. The third point of view is the chorologic, chorometric, or spatial point of view (Figure 25). Using this point of view the topically divided world of the topical sciences and the temporally divided world of history and natural history are again reunited, usually by geographers,

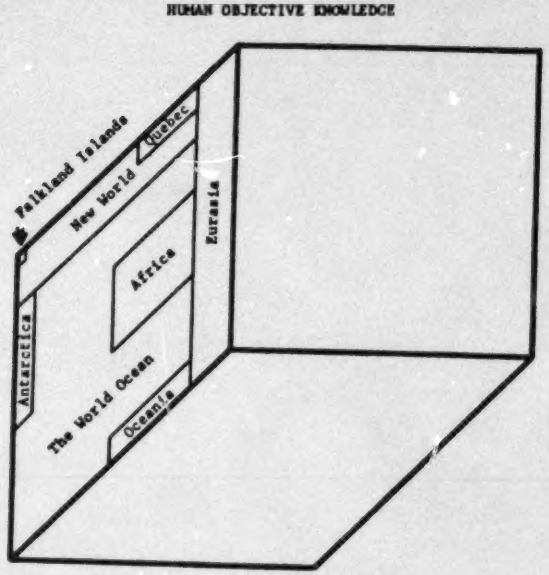

Fig. 25

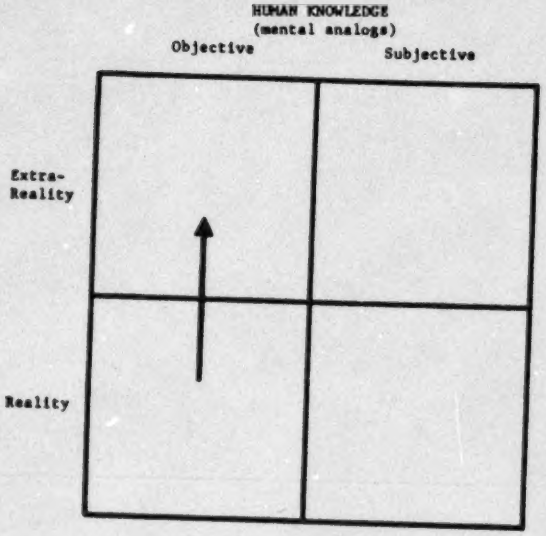

Fig. 26

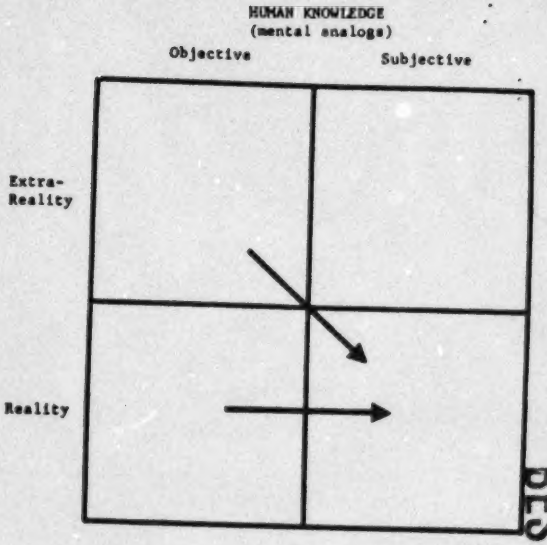

Fig. 27

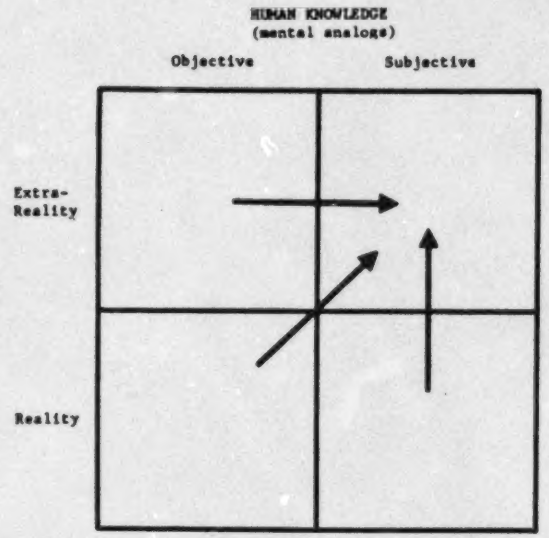

Fig. 28

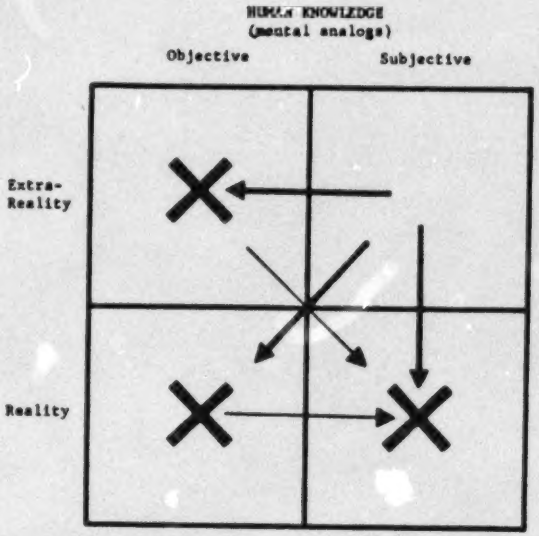

Fig. 29

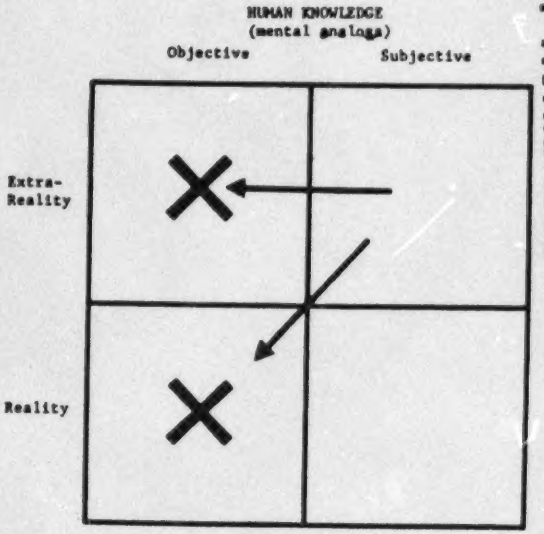

Fig. 30

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and then analyzed, or divided, into spatial units such as regions for study. Physical geographers usually utilize an objective criterion, such as drainage basins, for the purpose of spatially organizing the Earth's surface for study and human geographers usually utilize a subjective criterion, such as political boundaries, which primarily exist as human spatial concepts, or as other human concepts spatially measurable by the location of the people who possess them, such as language areas. Geographers can also utilize a combination of objective and subjective criterion. The spatial point of view offers mankind the third and only other known perspective from which to view the objective universe.[22]

Meanings come into play as man attempts to deal with real and extra-real objective knowledge and understanding. Humans are interested in meanings that relate to humans. They want to know what the objective means to them personally, to other humans, or to all humans. Meanings that individuals believe to be human in origin are a part of human subjective reality. Those meanings that are believed to be extra-human or, in the words of Robertson, "transcendent" in origin are a part of human subjective extra-reality, or human religion and religious beliefs (Figure 15). The human sciences, human geography, and history attempt to interpret objective knowledge, both real and extra-real, in a manner that increases subjective reality by conveying or lending human insight or meaning to humans for human utilization (Figure 27). Religion attempts to interpret objective and

subjective knowledge in a manner that increases subjective extra-reality by conveying or lending extra-human of transcendent or speculative insight or meaning to humans for human utilization (Figure 28). This process may include the use of the scientific method. Religion can also incorporate these extra-real or extra-human meanings into objective and real or human subjective understanding through the (religious) symbolizing process (Figure 29). Symbols are real and extra-real objects, space, and time that are affiliated with subjective meaning. Ritual is a particular kind of composite symbol in that it includes human behavior and events, often in conjunction with other symbols. Religious symbols and ritual are affiliated with extra-human subjective meaning (Figure 30). Non-religious symbols and ritual are not affiliated with extra-human meaning (Figure 31). The topical sciences, history, and geography can directly study only the real objective parts of religion such as religious people, symbols, and ritual (Figure 13). The philosophies as well as the findings of science, history, and geography can be directly addressed from the religious perspective, because religion is not methodologically limited to observations of the objective universe (Figure 32).

Geography of Religion: A Postscript

As a postscript I would like to return to my opening statement which mentioned the artificial and arbitrary nature of those useful human concepts known as definitions. My purpose has not been to

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

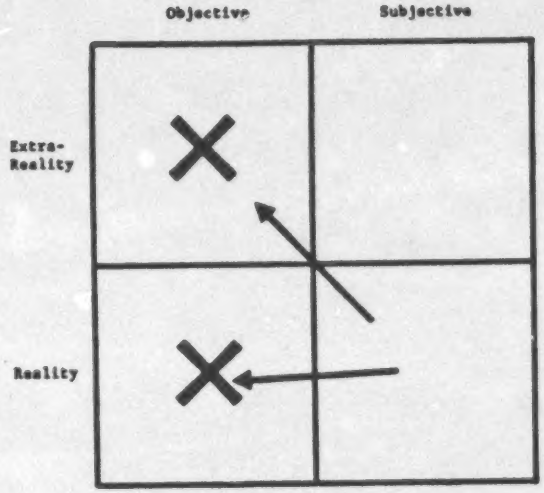


Fig. 31

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
(mental analogs)

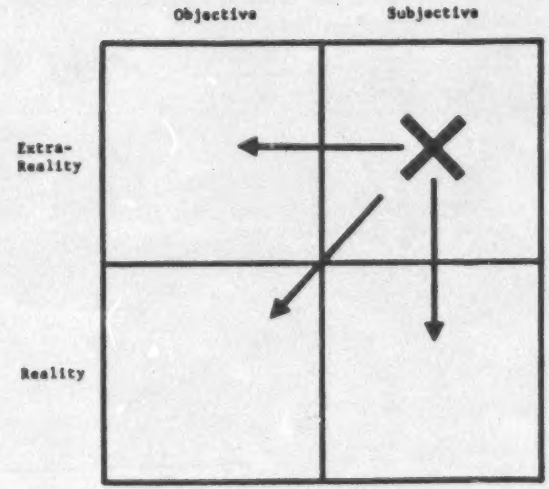
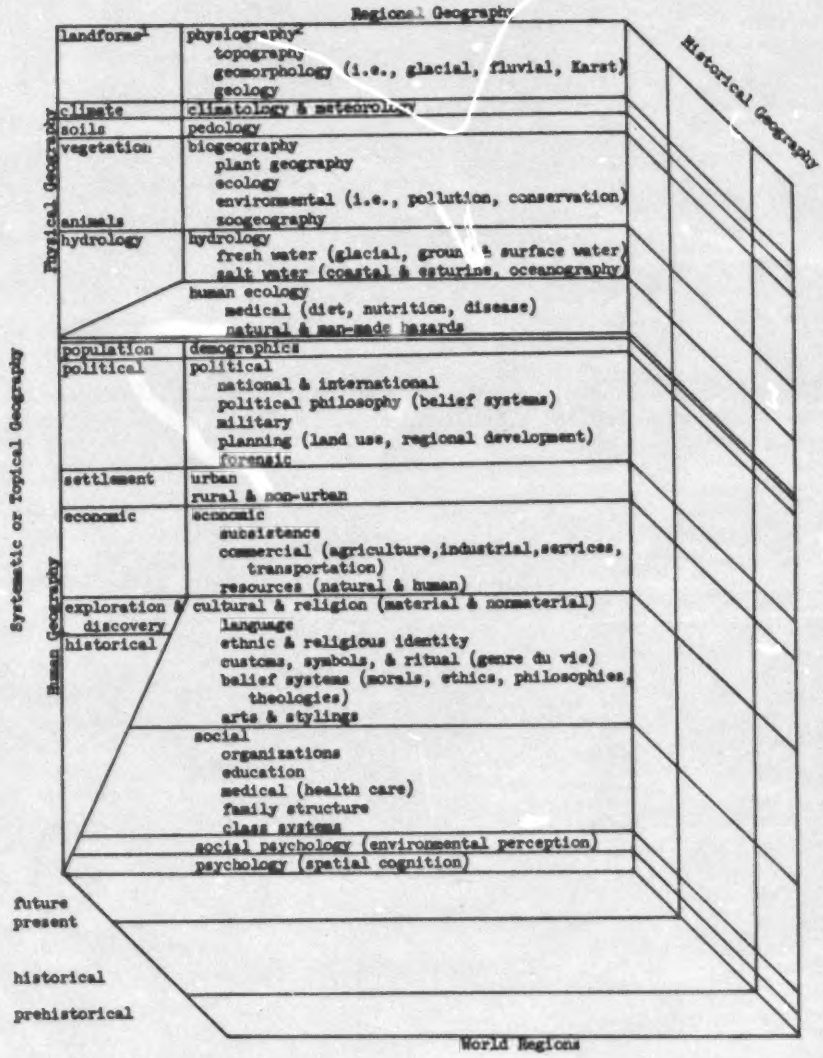


Fig. 32

GEOGRAPHY



[1]Hettner's 12 elements of geography.
[2]Today's topical fields and specialties in geography.

Fig. 33

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define science, history, geography, or religion, but rather to discuss how each of these construct analogs that attempt to delimit the scope and bounds of parts of a greater whole. In agreement with Greeley's assessment of the nature of models, I would like to emphasize that the verbal and graphic model presented here is an inherently "oversimplified and schematized design or template or pattern which provides a useful perspective for understanding".[23]

I would like to extend this discussion one step further to the geography of religion, that is to say, to the spatial, place, or regional knowledge of extra-human meaning. This is not meant to be confused with religious geography, or the extra-human meaning of spatial or "areal knowledge" (as Sauer referred to geography). The difference between the geography of religion and religious geography, as Isaac elaborates in his article on the subject, is one of approach or differing primary perspectives.[24]

Though there are three primary perspectives from which to view objective knowledge, no perspective is complete by itself. A wholistic understanding includes the remaining two primary types of objective knowledge as secondary and tertiary concerns. Thus, geographic knowledge necessarily includes objects or objective phenomena and time (Figure 33). Fields and subfields can be definitionally distinguished from each other by ordering the primary, secondary, and tertiary perspectives or concerns of each (Figure 34). This, of course, does not preclude people from crossing these arbitrary and

Fig. 34

Definitional Boundaries

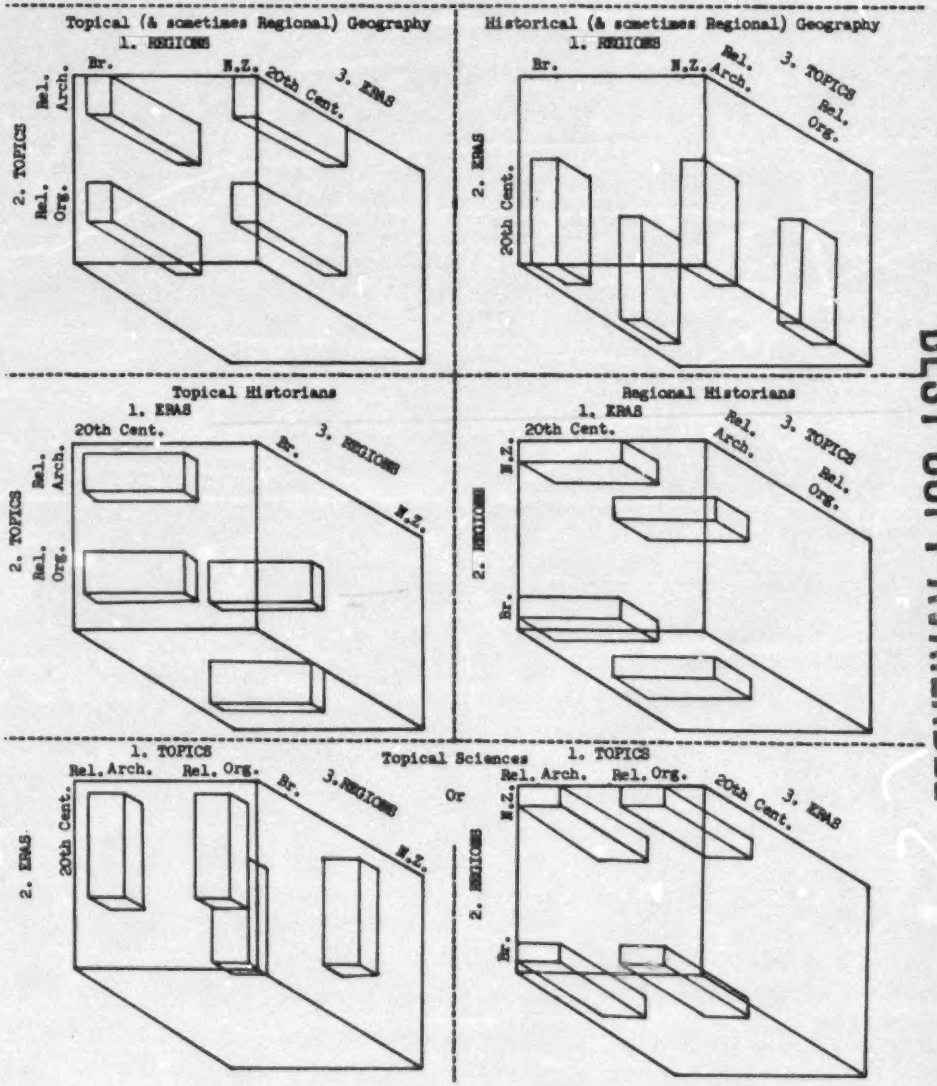
Field	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Geography	Space[1]	-	-
Topical (Systematic) Geography	Space	Topical Ordering	-
Physical Geography	Space	Objective Ordering	-
Human Geography	Space	Subjective Ordering	-
Geography of Religion	Space	Religion[2]	-
Geography of the Religious Landscape	Space	Religious people, symbols & rituals	-
Geography of Historical Religion[4]	Space	Religion	time[3]
Geography of Religious History	Space	Religion	time
Geography of Religious Geography	Space	Religion	space
Historical Geography	Space	Time	-
Geography of History	Space	Time	-
Geography of Historians	Space	Man	-
Historical Geography of Religion	Space	Time	religion
Religion	Religion	-	-
Religious Geography	Religion	Space	-
Historical Religious Geography	Religion	Space	time
Religious Historical Geography	Religion	Space	time
Historical Religion	Religion	Time	-
Religious History	Religion	Time	-
Religious History of Geography	Religion	Time	space
History	Time	-	-
History of Geographers	Time	Man	-
History of Geography	Time	Space	-
Geographical History	Time	Space	-
History of the Geography of Religion	Time	Space	religion
History of Religion	Time	Religion	-

[1]Chorometric Ordering
[2]Speculative Extra-Human Meaning
[3]Chronometric Ordering
[4]History looks at the past but the future can also be studied in each case that "time" is indicated as a concern (futuristics).

Fig. 35

"The Relationship Between 20th Century Religious Architecture and Religious Affiliations in New Zealand and Great Britain"

(Illustrated elevations of the same reality as viewed from six different perspectives. The primary, secondary, and tertiary concern of each perspective are numbered.)



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artificial boundaries. As Gilbert mentions, and later Fenneman repeats, the "cross-fertilization" that results from "scientific trespass" is valuable in increasing overall knowledge, so to is the understanding of the same reality from more than one perspective.[25]

Since geography (history and the human topical sciences) cannot directly study religion or extra-human meaning, it must study religion indirectly through those parts of the objective or the human landscape that are associated with extra-human meaning (i.e., religious people, symbols, and rituals). This is similar to the empirical anthropologists who study non-material culture via material culture. The final series of diagrams in Figure 35 represent the six different positions, aspects, or elevations from which a sample set of objective relationships defined in terms of topic, space, and time can be viewed. Each elevation represents one of the six possible hierarchical orderings of definitional concerns using the three primary perspectives. It should be emphasized that all six are of the same phenomena or parts of reality, only the perspective changes. The first diagram represents the perspective of the geography of religion and the second represents the perspective of historical geography or more specifically the historical geography of religion. The remaining four perspectives may be utilized by a geographer but are not definitionally geography.

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